

The President, in advocating for his privatization, has made the case or attempted to that Social Security faces an impending crisis, and I just want to let the administration know I think the American public sees through this fear tactic, this scare tactic.

I just want to read one quick letter on that point from Robert from Madison in my district. As he writes, "Bush has in recent weeks been repeatedly inflating the significance of 2018 and 2042, especially the early date, so as to imply that Social Security is in imminent danger of bankruptcy and must be overhauled very soon. The sheer urgency of Bush's tone is unsettlingly consistent with his demonstrated tendency to conjure up a crisis where none exists, as he did during the run-up to the war with Iraq."

"The overblown nature of Bush's alarms over Social Security is reflected in the Social Security trustee's estimate that, even if nothing drastic is done between now and 2042, Social Security will still be able to pay retirees" almost 75 percent "of the promised amount" and "this timeline hardly suggests any crisis that necessitates pounding away at a need to overhaul Social Security" or dismantle it "now."

I would like to yield to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT), my colleague.

Mr. HOLT. Madam Speaker, the gentlewoman from Wisconsin raises this approach of fear tactics, and of course, it leads to the question, well, why? Why does the President, why do some of our colleagues, why are people trying to change this program that our constituents tell us over and over again has meant the difference between dignity and destitution for them? Why do they want to change a program that works so well?

The spokesman from the White House and the President himself have said that privatization is not likely to help the finances of Social Security, but then they have gone on to say, well, even if it does not, it is the right thing to do. Then we have these youngsters at some of the President's road shows around the country chanting, "Hey, hey, ho, ho, Social Security has got to go."

We begin to understand what this is about. It is to overturn a program that they find ideologically unacceptable.

Leslie from Milltown, New Jersey, says, I think we have evidence that the motivation of these politicians for proposing individualized private accounts is driven by ideology, not by a real concern for strengthening and preserving Social Security.

That ideology I think is best summed up with the phrase, you are on your own. You are on your own and you will do well in the market. You are smarter than the market and you will be fine.

Let me tell my colleagues, my constituents say over and over again, we have tried private accounts. Before 1935 you were entitled to invest as much as you wanted in private accounts to prepare for your retirement, and you

know what, a majority of the elderly lived below the poverty line. That is why we have Social Security. It is a program that is, I think, one of the most successful we have had in America.

Let me just finish by saying we have had testimonials from so many of our constituents. Let me give a personal one.

My father died when I was six, without insurance, without a pension. My sister and mother and I received Social Security survivor benefits. She was teaching at a junior college on a small teacher's salary. That made an enormous difference.

When I talk about Pat from Lincroft who said Social Security for her brother's children brought dignity, whereas when her father had died before Social Security came into place, they had to live as charity cases, I know what she is talking about.

Social Security binds this country together in a way that no other program that has come out of this body has, and we should not throw it out just because of some ideological whim which is what is happening right now. That is why the country is so upset, why we are getting so much mail.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Madam Speaker, if the gentlewoman would yield, on that point, we heard the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) discuss that earlier, that even the President's so-called privatization plan does nothing to close the gap or the shortfalls that potentially exist in Social Security if we do not act on a bipartisan basis.

So to the gentleman's point, this is all about ideology and politics and not substantively about doing what is in the best interest of the American public. I think that is what has citizens so outraged, that this seems to be from the very get-go, from whether you go back to Hoover and Landon and Friedman and Stockman, who said we must starve the beast, that beast being Social Security, that is what has American citizens outraged at this proposal. That is what has them writing thousands of letters to each and every one of us because of their deep-seated concern of where this administration is taking us, to a "me" society versus "us."

The gentleman said it very eloquently and passionately, and again, I want to thank the gentlewoman for arranging this dialogue and these letters which I hope we continue to come to the floor and discuss.

□ 2200

Ms. BALDWIN. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his comments, and I would like to thank all of my colleagues who joined me here tonight in giving voice to these very real, very human stories. These are real letters from real people, and privatization would have a real and ultimately negative effect on their lives.

I know that those who seek to dismantle the Social Security System must receive similar letters, and I sincerely hope that they pause and con-

sider what Social Security means to Americans. It is not an arbitrary government program. Social Security is a support system, it is an insurance program, and, in many instances, Social Security is the difference between a comfortable life and a life of poverty. We must do all that we can to protect this vital safety net, this lifeline.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 3, TRANSPORTATION EQUITY ACT: A LEGACY FOR USERS

Mrs. CAPITO (during the Special Order of Ms. BALDWIN), from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 109-14) on the resolution (H. Res. 140) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 3) to authorize funds for Federal-aid highways, highway safety programs, and transit programs, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Ms. CARSON (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of medical reasons.

Ms. HERSETH (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and March 9 on account of a death in the family.

Mr. STUPAK (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and the balance of the week on account of medical reasons.

Mr. LEACH (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today on account of illness in the family.

Mr. RAMSTAD (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today on account of complications from eye surgery.

Mr. TIBERI (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for March 9 until 5:30 p.m. on account of his traveling to his district with the President.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mrs. CAPPS) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. DEFazio, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. EMANUEL, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. PALLONE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. MCCARTHY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. KIND, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. MALONEY, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)